DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 197 212 CE 027 896

AUTHOR Rice, Eric: And Others
TITLE Access to Vocational Education. A Planning System for Local Secondary and Post-Secondary Program and Facility Accessibility. Step 2: Establishing Goals and Priorities.
INSTITUTION Barrier Free Environments, Inc., Raleigh, N.C.: System Sciences, Inc., Chapel Hill, N.C.
SPONS AGENCY Office of Vocational and Adult Education (ED), Washington, D.C.
PUB DATE [80]
CONTRACT 300-78-0592
NOTE 11p.: Photographs and green headings will not reproduce well. For related documents see CE 027 894-901.

EDRS PRICE MF01/PC01 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS *Accessibility (for Disabled): *Access to Education: Administrator Guides: *Educational Planning: Equal Education: Evaluation Methods: Group Dynamics: Guidelines: *Needs Assessment: Postsecondary Education: Secondary Education: Systems Approach: *Vocational Education
IDENTIFIERS *Nominal Group Technique

ABSTRACT

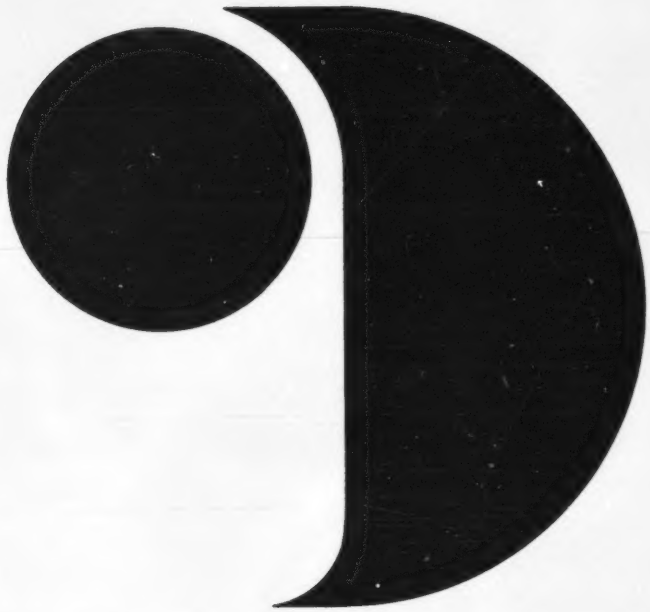
This guidebook focuses on the second of five steps included in a planning system for improving local secondary and postsecondary program and facilities accessibility: establishing priorities and goals. Specifically, the guidebook describes the nominal group technique and how it can be used to establish priorities and then select goals. Following an introductory section, suggested preliminary activities for the group leader are given. The remainder of the booklet is devoted to the four key activities that comprise the nominal group technique: (1) serial discussion for clarification, (2) preliminary voting on the priority barriers, (3) discussion of the preliminary vote, and (4) final voting. (LRA)

****
* Reproductions supplied by EDRS are the best that can be made *
* from the original document. *
****

ED197212

Access to Vocational Education

A Planning System for Local Secondary and Post-Secondary Program and Facility Accessibility



Step 2

Establishing Priorities and Goals

U S DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH, EDUCATION & WELFARE
NATIONAL INSTITUTE OF EDUCATION

THIS DOCUMENT HAS BEEN REPRODUCED EXACTLY AS RECEIVED FROM THE PERSON OR ORGANIZATION ORIGINATING IT. POINTS OF VIEW OR OPINIONS STATED DO NOT NECESSARILY REPRESENT OFFICIAL NATIONAL INSTITUTE OF EDUCATION POSITION OR POLICY

Step 2: Establishing Priorities and Goals

Modified Nominal Group Technique 1

Introduction

The second step in the Planning System uses a group decision-making and planning procedure to rank order the barriers identified in Step 1 according to their relative importance and to select from among alternate goals and objectives those goals and objectives that will be the focus of program development activity. The value of ranking the barriers in priority order derives from the limited amounts of resources—both time and money—that can be spent on the issue of accessibility, given the other requirements of providing educational services to all students. Establishing priorities and selecting goals are important to the planning process because they provide a starting point, a statement concerning where to direct energies for later evaluation.

It is particularly important to involve the Local Planning Committee (LPC) in Step 2 in order to gain consensus and support for future program development activities. The LPC should be used to establish priorities for barrier removal and to discuss and rank order the goals that you develop from the most important barriers.

A modified Nominal Group Technique procedure is recommended as the procedure for both establishing priorities and selecting goals. If you used the NGT to identify barriers in Step 1, then you have completed already the first part of Step 2, establishing priorities. In such instances, you must create a set of alternative goals and objectives and reconvene the LPC to select from among the suggested goals and objectives those that will be the targets of future planning and program development. The modified NGT activities of discussion and voting work well for this task. If you choose a technique other than NGT for Step 1, you should use the suggested procedure with the LPC first to establish priorities and then to select goals.

The NGT was derived from social-psychological studies of decision conferences, management science studies of aggregated group judgment and social work studies of problems involving citizen participation and program planning. The technique is recommended for Step 2 because it maximizes staff involvement. Another advantage is that members participate equally in sharing information on the problem because of the structured process. Nominal Group Technique meetings usually conclude with a perceived sense of closure, accomplishment, and interest in future phases of problem solving.

The booklets for Step 1: Identifying Barriers and Step 3: Generating Strategies contain complete descriptions of the Nominal Group Technique. The nominal group process suggested for use in Step 2 is more compact than the procedures that might be used for identifying barriers or generating strategies. The brevity of the modified process is warranted because the first two activites in a typical NGT session, identifying barriers and listing idenfified barriers, will have been completed during Step 1 of the Planning System, regardless of which technique you used. The Step 2 activity begins with clarification of a list of barriers from the first step and is focused on NGT rank-ordering procedures.

How to Conduct the Modified Nominal Group Technique

PRELIMINARY ACTIVITIES

Prior to scheduling the nominal group meeting you, as group leader, must clarify the objectives for the meeting through consultation with other administrators (and with group leaders if more than one group is involved). Specifically, the NGT question should be developed to which NGT participants will respond. In Step 2 the basic question is, "Which barriers are most important in our educational unit and must be addressed first?"

You must attend to a number of preliminary concerns before the meeting. These concerns include selecting and preparing the meeting room, providing the necessary supplies, composing an opening statement and compiling a master list of identified barriers. You should choose a meeting room large enough to accommodate the five to twelve LPC members around a table. You will need to provide the following supplies:

1 Chart on which is listed all identified barriers

2. Roll of masking tape

3. A pack of 3" x 5" cards

4. Felt pens

5. Worksheet and pencil for each participant

6. Background information on identified barriers

7. Flip chart on which to record the new list of barriers as they are compiled and restated through serial discussion

The use of the various items will become apparent in the description of the modified nominal group meeting.

You will, of course, need to contact all members of the Local Planning Committee in order to schedule an appropriate meeting time and in order to insure that all LPC members are invited and aware of the meeting time and location. Once the meeting logistics have been arranged, you must prepare an opening statement in which you provide a cordial welcome, convey a sense of significance concerning the group's task, clarify the importance of each member's contribution, indicate the purpose of the meeting and suggest the implications that the work will have for the future. As suggested earlier, an overview of the accessibility issue and the barriers identified in Step 1 of the Planning System will provide each member with sufficient background information to be effective in the meeting. The question to be solved should then be posed and explained. After explaining the mission and question, you, as group leader, should initiate group activity according to the following schedule.

Activity 1: Serial Discussion for Clarification. The first activity in the modified nominal group process is the discussion of each of the barriers identified in Step 1 of the Planning System. Serial discussion is the procedure to be used to stimulate LPC discourse. Serial discussion means addressing each idea listed on the chart in order and allowing a short period of time for the discussion of that idea. As the leader of the group, you will point to item #1, read it aloud, and ask the group if there are any questions, clarifications, or statements of agreement or disagreement which members would like to make about that item. After allowing a brief period of time for discussion, address attention to item #2, then item #3, and so on. Clarification will help all members understand the meaning of the brief words or phrases on the chart. Clarification may include discussion of the logic or analysis behind an item as well as the relative importance placed on the item.

During this step, lobbying, aggressive interaction, or disruptive argumentation should not be allowed to occur. The purpose of serial discussion is to enhance clarification and to minimize influence based on verbal prominence or status. The group leader should pace the discussion by not allowing conversation to become focused on any particular item or to degenerate into arguments. If differences of opinion exist, the leader should allow both points of view to be aired before shifting group attention to a discussion of the next item. Differences of opinion will be accurately recorded in the voting procedure, a later step in the modified nominal group process.

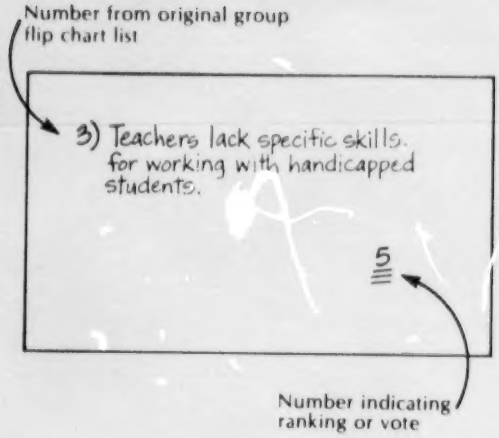
The leader must attempt to balance discussion across all items and all participants. The leader should make sure that no item suffers from inadequate clarification due to time constraints though some items may not need substantial clarification. The leader also should make sure that each person has an opportunity to comment on or question every item.

Often during serial discussion LPC members will suggest slight rewording or combination of two or more identified barriers into a more descriptive and manageable barrier item. As this occurs, you as group leader will have two responsibilities. First, you must insure that the meaning of the original barrier is not lost, especially since the suggested barrier may have been generated by someone other than an LPC member. Second, you must record on the flip chart any revised or combined barrier statements developed by the LPC during the meeting in order that these statements, together with those barriers that remain from the original list, can be ranked according to their importance.

Activity 2: Preliminary Voting on the Priority Barriers. After discussing each identified barrier, the next task is to determine the relative importance of different barriers by voting. Each member of the group should be given five 3" x 5" index cards and asked to select the five most important items from the entire list of barriers on the chart. Each item should be written on a separate 3" x 5" card.

The voting process is uncomplicated. After each group member has selected five barriers and written each on a separate card, ask group members to choose the card on which the item they consider to be most important is written. Instruct members to write the number "5" in the lower righthand corner of the card and underline that number three times. Have group members turn over the card they numbered. Next, instruct them to look at the remaining four cards. Of the remaining four cards, have the group members select the card on which the least important item is written, write the number "1" in the lower righthand corner and underline that number three times. After turning that card over, have the group choose the most important item listed on the remaining three cards, rank this item "4" and underline the number three times. Then, select the least important item of the remaining two cards, rank this item "2" and underline it. Instruct the group to write "3" on the last card and underline the number. The figure on page 7, Index Card Indicating Voting Process, illustrates a sample index card.

INDEX CARD INDICATING VOTING PROCESS


Number from original group flip chart list
3) Teachers lack specific skills for working with handicapped students.
5
Number indicating ranking or vote

The group should be given a short time to reexamine their rankings before passing the cards to the leader. After collecting the cards the leader may shuffle them to preserve anonymity and insure that no individual's voting pattern can be identified. You should then make a tally sheet on the flip chart by numbering the left-hand side of the sheet in accordance with the original list of barriers on the flip chart. Ask one member of the group to read each item number and the rank number from the collected stack of voting cards. With one group member reading and you recording, the preliminary vote is tallied as is shown in the illustration below, Sample Tally Sheet for Recording Rankings and Calculating Priority Items.

SAMPLE TALLY SHEET FOR RECORDING RANKINGS AND CALCULATING PRIORITY ITEMS

Item Number*	Rank	Times Ranked	Sum of Ranks	No. of Ranks × Sum of Ranks	Priority
1	3,2,2,2,1	5	10	50	6
2	4,5,5,5	4	19	76	1
3	5,5,5,3	4	18	72	2
4	2,1,3,4,2	5	12	60	4
5	5,4,4,3	4	16	64	3
6	4,4,3,4	4	15	60	4
7	3,1,1,2	4	7	28	7

*List as many times as needed

After you have recorded the number of each item and the ranks in the appropriate column, you are ready to manipulte the numbers mathematically to obtain an overall expression of priorities. First, count and enter the number of times an item has been ranked (column 3). Then sum the ranks (column 4) and multiply "times ranked" by "sum of ranks". The largest number in column 5 indicates the barrier with the highest priority; the second highest represents the next priority and so on. The top five priorities should be written on a separate sheet of paper in rank order and presented to the group for confirmation.

At this point, the Nominal Group Technique process can be concluded. If, however, increased judgmental accuracy is desired or the output of several groups must be combined, two activities should be added: Discussion of the Preliminary Vote and Revoting. These activities are essentially Activities 1 and 2 repeated, though the discussion is focused on inconsistent patterns in the voting and/or the integration of separate lists. Activities 3 and 4 are particularly important if the results of several nominal group exercises, for example, sessions from different high schools, must be combined.

Activity 3: Discussion of the Preliminary Vote. In this activity you should help the group examine inconsistent voting patterns or the compilation of several lists of barriers. It also provides an opportunity to discuss items which are perceived as receiving too many or too few votes. You should define the task as clarification, *not* social pressure to get members of the group to change their minds. Urging clarification also encourages participants to be brief so that barriers not discussed remain clearly in mind.

Activity 3 utilizes serial discussion of all listed barriers in order to clarify each item on the total list. While conducting this serial discussion, duplicate items can be eliminated and/or regrouped as appropriate, thereby reducing the size of the overall list. In addition, discussions about each item as well as information about the preliminary voting permit the entire group to consider the importance of each item as compared to the others. The group leader must insure that each item is discussed sufficiently to encompass all points of view; however, excessive time should not be devoted to any single item.

Activity 4: Final Voting. After clarification and discussion of the items the membership should be instructed to vote on the entire list of barriers following the procedure outlined in Activity 2, as described earlier. As you will recall, this procedure called for each group member to select the five most important barriers from the list of items, and to write each selected barrier on a single 3" x 5" card. Group members must choose the card on which the item they consider to be most important is written. Members write the number "5" in the lower right hand corner of the card and underline it three times. Next, members must rank the remaining four cards from most important to least important barrier. The most important barrier listed on one of the remaining four cards receives a score of four, written in the lower right hand corner of the card. The other items receive scores of "3", "2" and "1" respectively with the least important item of the original five listed on the card receiving a score of one. After the members have voted, the cards are collected and the votes are counted on a tally sheet as explained in Activity 2. This final balloting determines the product of the meeting, provides a sense of closure and accomplishment, and documents the group's judgment.

Please note that if you have decided to use, or have used, the Nominal Group Technique or Delphi technique in the barrier identification phase, the barriers for your system will have already been placed in priority order. Therefore you should move immediately to the goal setting portion of this step as described in the *Guide*. Identical discussion and voting procedures are recommended for selecting among the alternative goals you will have developed for your educational unit to complete the goal setting portion of Step 2.

Further Directions

Please return to the *Guide* and continue reading about the Planning System, *Step 3: Generating Strategies.*

References

Delbecq, A. L., A. H. Van de Ven and D. H. Gustafson. *Group Techniques for Program Planning.* Glenview, Illinois: Scott, Foresman and Co., 1975.

Hughes, J. H., and E. Rice. *Needs Assessment Procedure: Mainstreaming Handicapped.* Chapel Hill, North Carolina: System Sciences, Inc., 1978.